State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History

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> If you have nothing to tell us but that on the banks of the
> Oxus and the Jaxartes one barbarian has been succeeded by
> another barbarian, in what respect do you benefit the public?
>   Voltaire, "On the Method or Manner
>   of Writing History, and of Style," in
>   *Philosophical Dictionary*

Some recent publications on world history periodization attest to
world historians' efforts to find viable criteria that could be adopted
in a systematic, coherent, and yet non-"centric" vision of global history.[1]
There seems to be a measure of consensus, noted by William McNeill,
around the notion of transcivilizational, or cross-cultural, phenomena
that would bring to the surface connections among different regions of
the world—connections otherwise invisible to historians who investi-
gate a single society or civilization.[2] The web of linkages thus uncovered

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[1] See William Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World
History* 3 (1992): 13–53; and "Periodizing World History," *History and Theory* 34 (1995):
99–111.

[2] William McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," *History and Theory* 34
(1995): 14.

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would eventually show the "systemic" relations existing between "areal" histories previously considered separately.[3]

In the first of two "Forum" articles published in the *American Historical Review,* Jerry Bentley proposes a periodization that emphasizes transregional and cross-cultural processes. In the second, Patrick Manning rightly warns us that the definitions of terms such as *culture* and *trade* still need a good deal of honing.[4] Yet Bentley's argument that examination of those "processes transcending individual societies and cultural regions"—mass migrations, campaigns of imperial expansion, and cultural interactions—should be the pillars of world history periodization is a convincing departure point.[5] Both McNeill's and Bentley's periodizations assign to nomadic peoples a central role from 1000 to 1500 A.D., an age described by Bentley as the "age of transregional nomadic empires."[6] However, such a centrality is not supported in world history scholarship by an adequate assessment of how and why nomadic peoples achieved such a preeminent position.[7] The aim of this essay is to frame the related issues of continuity, coherence, and change

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[3]This approach is particularly marked in world system works. For attempts to integrate inner Asian history in a systemic world history, see the following: Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); S. A. M. Adshead, *Central Asia in World History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); A. Gunder Frank, *The Centrality of Central Asia,* Comparative Asian Studies 8 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992). A Wallersteinian "core/periphery" theoretical framework is adopted by Thomas Hall in "The Role of Nomads in Core/Periphery Relations," in *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds,* ed. Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 212–39; and Gary Seaman, "Introduction: World Systems and State Formation on the Inner Eurasian Periphery," in *Rulers from the Steppe: State Formation on the Eurasian Periphery,* ed. Gary Seaman and Daniel Marks (Los Angeles: Ethnographics Press, 1991), pp. 1–20.

[4]Jerry H. Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 749–70; see also, for a further elaboration of cross-cultural interactions 500–1500: Jerry H. Bentley, "Hemispheric Integration, 500–1500 C.E.," *Journal of World History* 9 (1998): 237–54; Patrick Manning, "The Problem of Interactions in World History," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 771–82.

[5]Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction," p. 750.

[6]Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction," p. 766; William McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 484–562.

[7]Mackinder introduced the notion of Eurasia as the "pivot" of world history at the beginning of the twentieth century, and McGovern in 1939 provided a systematic summary of the role of central Asia in world history, including material and cultural traits, art, religion, and political history from prehistory to modern times. McNeill also placed steppe empires at the heart of the first half of the second millennium. See Halford John Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal* 23 (1904): 421–37; William Montgomery McGovern, "Introduction: Central Asia in World History," in *The Early Empires of Central Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), pp. 1–24; McNeill, *The Rise of the West,* pp. 484–562.

in inner Asian history within a periodization that would allow the political creations of the steppe nomads to be usefully integrated within a global and inclusive vision of history.[8]

Typically, world and "civilization" historians represent inner Asian phenomena as either "natural catastrophes" or "environments." The first of these two analytical models has been often embraced by historians of Europe and other "civilizational" areas. Familiar representations of Attila the Hun as the "Scourge of God" and apocalyptic scenarios associated with the Mongol conquests are conjured up, for instance, by Fernand Braudel's analogy between nomadic invasions and biblical plagues.[9] According to this view, the appearance of steppe pastoral peoples, from their emergence in history until the mid-seventeenth century, never changed: they remained violent, cruel, devastating events. Their relevance to world history is limited to their more or less ruinous impact on the development of neighboring civilizations: China, India, Islam, and Christianity. In a somber narrative marked by "unsung catastrophes" and "wholesale massacres," inner Asian empires are no longer represented as historical products, but rather as biological or natural events. These events do not belong to the etiological sphere of human history, but instead impact upon and derail it, thus affecting its perceived natural evolution. In both India and China, according to Braudel, nomadic invasions were at least partly responsible for their lagging behind with respect to the West. *Eruptions, explosions,* and *out-*

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[8]*Inner Asia* is a term notoriously hard to define. There are major difficulties with the formulation of a viable definition that have long hindered efforts to represent it as a coherent historical concept. Having been written mostly by people outside inner Asia, the historical narrative appears segmented across different regions and languages; its geographical and cultural boundaries remain controversial. Here I use the term *inner Asia* to refer to the area described by some scholars as greater central Asia (that is, not restricted to the ex-Soviet republics), or central Eurasia, or (in the past) high Asia. This includes the regions to the north and east of the Black Sea, north of Iran and the Himalayas, and to the west and north of China, including Manchuria. Historically, these regions tended to grow larger or smaller in accord with their political expansions or contractions, which in turn depended on their relations with the settled states of east Asia, India, Asia Minor, Russia, and Anatolia. The areas bordering those civilizations constituted a transitional zone where balances between pastoral and farming economies shifted over time. The concept of this transitional zone or "frontier" is central to Lattimore's understanding of inner Asian historical processes, as he argued in his seminal *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1940, 1953; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), and it is often this transitional zone that appears to be at the center of cultural and political process of greater world historical relevance.

[9]Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, trans. Richard Mayne (New York: Penguin Press, 1994), pp. 164–68. In his world history work, Pirenne also regarded the nomadic "civilization" as both unchanging and destructive, and viewed the *pax Mongolica* as a political order built upon destruction and ruin of civilized countries, though he also recognized that some nomads could be "touched" by civilizations; see Jacques Pirenne, *Les grands courants de l'histoire universelle*, 3 vols. (Neichatel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1946), 2:145–47.

breaks are terms used commonly to describe the nomads' role in a history that essentially excludes them as active agents.[10]

The second approach is more widely endorsed by world historians, who seem, in general, to be sensitive to the notion that nomadic polities may change in time and aware of the existence of differences among the various Eurasian pastoral peoples. As McNeill pointed out, although "economic, political, and military patterns of horse nomadry altered very little," throughout history knowledge of civilized ways, increased trade contacts, and other factors made the nomads increasingly aware of the wealth of southerly civilizations.[11] Bentley acknowledges a similar process of change at the political level: "As they organized political life on progressively larger scales, they established powerful states."[12] Yet nomadic polities seem to be more attractive to world historians for their commonalities than for their differences. "Constants" include, for instance, the nomads' inability to spread indigenous cultural traditions and their adoption of, or assimilation by, the cultures they encountered in their conquests. Above all, world historians emphasize the nomads' role in facilitating communication over long distances, as their conquests objectively favored trade, the spread of religions, the acquisition of geographical knowledge, and technological exchanges. So-called steppe empires created fluid environments, suitable for travel and trade, that allowed the peripheral civilizations to come into contact with one another. Like a chemical solution, the nomads allowed "reactions" to take place, but were not themselves the main agents.[13] In this analytical mode, soon after the dust of war settles, the nomads become passive "extras," and recede into the background while Venetian merchants, Arab mariners, Chinese inventors, and European missionaries come to the foreground.

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[10] On nomadic invasions as a regressive force, see E. L. Jones, *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993 [1988]), pp. 108–15. Samuel Huntington stated that Russia was cut off from the Byzantine and Western civilization during the centuries of Mongol domination; see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997 [1996]), p. 139. Not surprisingly, scholars who hold this view are seldom inclined to accept pastoral societies as being part of any "civilization"; see *Boundaries of Civilizations in Space and Time,* ed. Matthew Melko and Leighton R. Scott (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), p. 124.

[11] McNeill, *Rise of the West,* pp. 486–87.

[12] Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 136.

[13] This reflects, perhaps, Toynbee's belief in the high degree of "conductivity" of the steppe, which, like the sea, allowed for the rapid movement of peoples and diffusion of languages, ideas, and goods. See Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History,* 12 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945–), pp. 391–94.

The study of "connections" on such a macroscopic scale, however, requires that the world historian be able not only to document the existence of transregional phenomena, but also to establish the deeper "currents" that allow these processes to emerge. Periodizations are necessary analytical tools that permit the historian to identify key moments of transition, whose significance and validity depend, naturally, upon the criteria adopted to qualify historical change. The measure of the validity of any periodization rests in its ability to isolate elements accountable for change, whether the subject is society, institutions, production, or cultures.

The juggernaut of the Mongol conquest, with its commercial, political, and cultural implications, is a historical event dazzling enough to make virtually all scholars agree that it was a watershed event in both world history and inner Asian history. For the Russian orientalist Barthold, the Mongol conquest of central Asia was a natural turning point, one that allowed for the creation of an original synthesis of Muslim-Persian and Chinese-Mongol cultures, and which eventually produced the cultural efflorescence of central Asia under the Timurids.[14] A division between pre-Chinggisid and Chinggisid political traditions is a widely accepted concept in the history of central Asia.[15] Mongols are also given pride of place in a broader debate involving historians of China and world historians. Janet Abu-Lughod regards the Mongol conquest as an important element in the thirteenth-century world system, as it favored the transit of goods and merchants from Europe to China.[16] Adshead refers to the Mongol conquest as an "explosion" that effectively ignited "world history," and compares it to a "big bang." The centuries after the Mongol conquest are divided into a phase of "activity" of central Asia in world history, and one in which it became "passive," with a demarcation line drawn in the mid-seventeenth century.[17]

Yet even though the rise and expansion of the Mongols did constitute a dividing line, such a partition does not amount to a periodization. More important, unless the history of the Mongols is related to the history of inner Asian empires in an organic manner—as it must

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[14]W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (1928; reprint, Thetford: Lowe and Brydone, 1977), p. 494.

[15]See, for instance, Morris Rossabi, "The Legacy of the Mongols," in *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, ed. Beatrice Manz (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 27–44; P. B. Golden, "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Chinggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 37–76.

[16]Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, p. 154.

[17]Adshead, *Central Asia in World History*, p. 53.

be to provide any analytical value—perceived "breaks" can be noted only after a notion of historical continuity or coherence has first been established. From a world history perspective, the perceived lack of continuity, and therefore of factors accountable for change, *within an inner Asian regional context,* translates into the approaches mentioned above: the cataclysm and the environment.

In a recent article, David Christian compounds many of the most innovative ideas about the "centrality" of central Asia, to borrow Frank's term, in a valiant attempt to define inner Asia, or inner Eurasia, as a unit of world history.[18] Christian finds coherence in the distinctive features of the history, geography, and ecology of inner Eurasia, and then proceeds to periodize inner Eurasian history according to "five adaptations," starting from the earliest hominids, the hunters of 40,000 years ago, and ending with the Soviet command economy. In Christian's periodization pastoral nomadic states emerge in the third adaptation. The fourth adaptation coincides with the rise of "agrarian autocracy" in Russia (regarded as a part of inner Eurasia), which eventually made it the "dominant polity of Inner Eurasia."[19] Christian's assessment of inner Eurasian history may be disputed on several counts, among them his definition of Russia's role in it and his very geographic understanding of the area, but these points do not detract from the overall strengths of his work. In particular, Christian stresses the need to periodize inner Eurasian history to make it a coherent part of world history and, within that horizon, focuses on the formation of pastoral nomadic states. He represents this as "a profound change in the history of Inner Eurasia," with the result that "pastoral nomadic lifeways set the tone and shaped the history of Inner Eurasia between 1000 B.C.E and 1500 C.E."[20] Naturally, the wide optics adopted by Christian prevent him from focusing more closely on this particular period. As a result, the dominance of pastoral nomadic states is seen as a single phase within a long-term evolutionary scheme. But the stage is set to analyze this historical period as a distinctive "unit of world history."

To explain the different rates of success of various pastoral nomadic states not only in terms of duration and territorial expansion, but also in the ways in which they were able to make their presence felt outside inner Eurasia, it is necessary to penetrate more deeply into the maturation process of this long and truly distinctive period of inner Asian his-

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[18]David Christian, "Inner Eurasia as a Unit of World History," *Journal of World History* 5 (1994): 173–211.
[19]Christian, "Inner Eurasia," p. 207.
[20]Christian, "Inner Eurasia," pp. 196–97.

tory. Inner Asian political formations cannot be lumped together simply on the basis of the common "nomadic" nature of inner Asian peoples, but there are common threads and institutions that bespeak of a distinct tradition, as long as we understand the term tradition in a loose and segmentary way, open to many variations, as the "traditionary" material of past experiences is re-evoked and re-elaborated in light of new historical circumstances.[21] For instance, Seljuk Turks and Mongols display differences in their style of rulership, owing to the influence of the Islamic milieu in which the Seljuks operated, but also considerable similarities that ultimately could be traced back to inner Asia roots. Yet it is important to realize that, even though this political tradition permeates the history of inner Asian nomads, as they established larger and powerful states, not all inner Asian peoples partook of it. Some political formations built on an existing tradition, others did not. It cannot be assumed solely on the basis of resemblances in lifestyle and economic production that certain patterns of political organization are naturally found in regions where they were not historically rooted; this would lead to a pitfall that we might call *anatopism*. Anachronisms and anatopisms loom large in the interpretation of inner Asian history. Yet a history written from a world historical perspective, whose task is to "make sense" of transregional and cross-cultural phenomena, must seek the deep causes of massive human displacements, the socioeconomic foundations and political origins of steppe empires, the premises of their interaction with other peoples and states. This would mean tackling the actual internal changes in the dynamics of state formation and evolution of inner Asian empires, seen not simply as variations on a theme that lasted 2,500 years, but as political creations endowed with an internal capacity of preservation, modification, and transmission of the historical experience.

It is not necessary to repeat that change is not necessarily progress; on the other hand, the stereotype of nomadic-type societies refractory to improvement, although somewhat valid for arguments limited to economic production, has negatively affected the perception of how

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[21] I borrow the term "traditionary" from Hans-Georg Gadamer. Speaking of traditionary material rather than "traditions" allows us to understand the meaning of tradition as detached from the agents of a given historical experience. Traditionary institutions remained in inner Asia a set of diffuse political conventions, quite separate from the "traditional" customs and rituals that may demarcate the ethnic boundaries of a given clan or tribe. Historical consciousness played a large role in the transmission of these institutions. On "traditionary" see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinshamer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), p. 358 and *passim*.

these societies have organized themselves politically through history. The states and empires of inner Asia had political dimensions and economic bases by no means limited to what steppe pastoral and semi-pastoral production and social organization could offer. Not only did change occur, but, as we shall see below, its driving force should be sought exactly in those structural limitations often attributed to pastoral nomadism. In this essay I shall attempt to outline a periodization of inner Asian imperial history based on inner Asia's own historical dynamism.

The Formation of "Steppe" Empires

State formation among pastoral nomads has been looked at from the viewpoint of internal development and as the product of contacts with external, already formed, states.[22] Scholars often combine endogenous and exogenous factors in historical analyses, but they usually emphasize one of the two. Among the endogenous factors, a central one is taken to be the role of the charismatic "empire builders"—individuals able to maneuver successfully, both militarily and diplomatically, in the turbulent waters of steppe politics, and to create tribal confederations, perhaps even empires, with centralized political authority and military command.[23] The fall of these formations is then attributed to an excessive personalization of power, which causes the whole edifice to crumble at the death of the founder.

   Other "endogenous" theories have examined the social structure behind the "big man." Vladimirtsov has defined Mongol social stratification at the time of Chinggis Khan in terms of nomadic "feudalism."

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[22] The "state" here is meant to be understood under the rubric of the "early state" investigated by anthropologists. A classification of early states is provided by Claessen, who divides them into three types: inchoate, typical, and transitional. The first is characterized by the dominant role of kin and community ties in politics, a limited number of full-time specialists, vague ad hoc taxation, and a relationship of reciprocity and direct contact between ruler and ruled that offsets social contrasts. In *typical* states kinship ties play a lesser role; competition among individuals and direct appointments are set against the principle of heredity; nonkin officials and title-holders play a leading role in government. *Transitional* states have an administrative apparatus dominated by appointed officials; kinship affects only certain marginal aspects of government; and there are the requisite conditions for the emergence of private ownership of the means of production, of a market economy, and of overtly antagonistic classes. See Henri J. M. Claessen, "The Early State: A Structural Approach," in *The Early State,* ed. Claessen and Peter Skálnik (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), pp. 533–96.
[23] See, for instance, René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. xxvii.

According to this view, competition among different aristocratic groups had to result in the creation of a federation under the most successful leader.[24] Harmatta has also claimed that the ascent of a nomadic leader was linked to deeper social transformations.[25] Krader rejected Vladimirtsov's definition of nomadic "feudalism," maintaining instead that pastoral societies evolve into states due to internal social dynamism, while admitting that contacts with sedentary neighbors are essential to such an evolution.[26]

On the other end of the spectrum, an "exogenous" origin of the state has been sought in notions of universal emperorship transmitted to the nomads from sedentary states, or in the civil institutions and bureaucratic apparatus borrowed from China, Persia, or Russia— regarded by some scholars as essential to the development of an imperial polity among the nomads.[27] Still, to say that inner Asian polities were not states *unless* they borrowed a certain type of ideology or conformed to a given bureaucratic model is a spurious argument, one that hinges on the definition of the state rather than on the quality of the nomadic polity.[28] Several large inner Asian political entities, such as the Xiongnu, Türks, and Uighurs, displayed a very high degree of political centralization and ability to mobilize large human and mate-

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[24]B. Vladimirtsov, *Le régime social des Mongols: Le féodalisme nomade* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1948), pp. 105–10.

[25]J. Harmatta, "The Dissolution of the Hun Empire," *Acta Archaeologica* 2 (1952): 277–304.

[26]On this criticism, see Lawrence Krader, "Qan-Qagan and the Beginning of Mongol Kingship," *Central Asiatic Journal* 1 (1955): 28–30; and "Feudalism and the Tartar Polity of the Middle Ages," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1 (1958): 76–88.

[27]J. J. Saunders, "The Nomad as Empire-Builder: A Comparison of the Arab and Mongol Conquests," in *Muslims and Mongols,* ed. G. W. Rice (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1977), pp. 36–66; Herbert Franke, "From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty," *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte* (Munich) 2 (1978): 1–85; Igor de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chingis Khan's Empire," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973): 21–36.

[28]No nomadic polity without specific military and bureaucratic regional institutions of coordination and control could be defined as a true state, according to the definition by Allen Johnson and Timothy Earle in *The Evolution of Human Societies: From Foraging Group to Agrarian State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 246. Since nomads, as a consequence of high mobility and sparse population, did not develop administrative networks unless they ruled a territory that included large numbers of sedentary people, most nomadic polities would fall into the category of chiefdoms or complex chiefdoms. On the other hand, if we follow the typology outlined by Henry Claessen and Peter Skalník, these states would fall into the category of "typical" early states; see Claessen and Skalník, "The Early State: Theories and Hypotheses," in *The Early State,* p. 23; and Claessen, "The Early State: A Structural Approach," in *The Early State,* pp. 589–93. Obviously the "chiefdom" of the first corresponds to the "early state" of the second.

rial resources that defy the definition of "chiefdom," even though their direct rule remained limited largely to a nomadic and seminomadic tribal constituency, and their administrative networks could not be compared to those of China. Moreover, inner Asian states often borrowed civil institutions not directly from the dominant civilizations —such as China or Persia—but from smaller or even marginal polities.[29] In general, when they did in fact borrow institutions from a sedentary neighbor, this process was selective, depended greatly on the composition of an *already formed* "supratribal" structure, and always resulted in the formation of "mixed" institutions. At both the political and economic levels, internal development and external forces and stimuli were placed in a dialectic relationship. Hence, the postulate that the administrative institutions of sedentary states were an essential precondition for the coming into existence of an inner Asian state is only partially true and potentially misleading.

Most promisingly, however, several scholars have looked at the interaction between nomads and other forces external to their societies, and have produced hypotheses based on the combination of exogenous and endogenous factors. The first to point to the interaction between nomads and agriculturalists as a systemic relationship that accounted for historical change in the history of the nomads was Owen Lattimore, who based on such an interaction his insightful and influential definition of "cycles" of nomadic power.[30] Krader's theory of state formation among Turco-Mongol peoples posits the existence of two mutually dependent specialized societies—the agricultural and the pastoral—and of a continentwide exchange network between the two.

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[29]For instance, the Khitan Liao dynasty (907–1125) borrowed some essential elements of its administration, such as the establishment of multiple capitals, from the conquered state of Bohai, whose administrative tradition was different from the Chinese. On Bohai, see Johannes Reckel, *Bohai: Geschichte und Kultur eines mandschurisch-koreanischen Königreiches der Tang-Zeit,* Aetas Manjurica 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995). The Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1234) surely accepted many features of the Chinese bureaucracy but also followed the syncretic nomadic/sedentary model developed by the Khitan. The Mongols adopted models of government developed by Uighur, Khitan, Jurchen, and central Asian administrators, coupled with Chinese and Persian institutions after the completion of the conquest, and the Yuan government was characterized by the proliferation of central agencies and bureaus, quite different from the Jin and the Song dynastic polities it replaced. See David Morgan, *The Mongols* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 108–11; David M. Farquhar, "Introduction: From Mongolian Clan to Yüan Empire," in *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule: A Reference Guide* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 1–11. For an overview of different assessments of Yuan history, see John D. Langlois, "Introduction," in *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 12–21.

[30]Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China,* pp. 519–23.

He links the development of class differentiation among the nomads to the leading role played by some—the aristocracy-to-be—in the organization of exchange of the pastoralists' surplus for agricultural goods.[31] The aristocracy eventually came to dominate the exchange system and in addition exacted tribute from the commoners. Although the system had some defects, such as producing armed confrontations and raids from time to time, this was an atypical condition.[32] The state among the Turco-Mongol nomads was, then, the product of a stratified society in which the two main classes had mutually opposed relations to the means of production. The emergence of the "state" is placed by Krader in an evolutionary scheme, of which the Mongols constitute the highest point.[33] This position is based on a perceptive analysis of internal social evolution of pastoral societies, but its main operative assumption—the existence of two solid blocs, nomads and settled, forming a single coherent exchange system across Eurasia—cannot be substantiated, since in fact we find multiple forms of adaptations both within nomadic economy and in the relationship between pastoralists and agriculturalists.[34] Moreover, several groups of steppe nomads remained stateless, regardless of the existence of class stratification.[35] Yet in focusing on the interaction between pastoral nomads and other societies as a

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[31] In connection with the many questions related to trade, we may notice that, although there is evidence that Mongols and other nomadic polities promoted trade, it is difficult to say whether the nomads themselves were actively involved in trading and whether they formed a separate class of specialists. On this question, with special relevance to the Mongols, see Thomas Allsen, "Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners, 1200–1260"; and Elisabeth Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yüan China, the Ortoğ," both in *Asia Major,* 3d ser., 2 (1989).

[32] The assumption that war between nomads and agriculturalists was an anomaly that resulted from the breaking down of the exchange mechanisms echoes the "trade or raid" theory. According to this theory, periodic conflicts between China and the nomads are to be attributed to China's unwillingness to allow trade or to subsidize nomadic economy with tribute, which forced the nomads to organize themselves into raiding parties and make use of their military superiority to fulfill the economic function of trade. While addressing some of the reasons that allegedly led to a cyclical alternation of peace and war, this theory does not explain the rise of nomadic empires, instead dismissing them as anomalies. For an extensive illustration of this theory, see Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War and Trade along the Great Wall* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

[33] Lawrence Krader, "The Origin of the State among the Nomads of Asia," in *The Early State,* ed. Claessen and Skálnik, pp. 93–107. This echoes an earlier position held by Owen Lattimore in "The Geographical Factor in Mongol History," *Geographical Journal* 91 (1938): 1–20.

[34] Krader's position was also criticized in Thomas Barfield, "The Hsiung-nu Imperial Confederation: Organization and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Asian Studies* 41 (1981): 46.

[35] On this question, see Peter Golden, "The Qïpcaq of Medieval Eurasia: An Example of Medieval Adaptation in the Steppe," in *Rulers from the Steppe,* ed. Seaman and Marks, pp. 132–57.

fundamental precondition for the formation of states among the nomads, Krader combined endogenous and exogenous factors in a causal relationship, an approach that has turned out to be extremely fruitful for analyzing state formation in inner Asian history.

Another line of investigation, also based on the interaction between nomads and agriculturalists, has produced an understanding of the development of the state as a way to redress an economic imbalance. Being based on a nomadic economy characterized by a chronic need for agricultural products, pastoralists organized into raiding parties any time they were prevented from trading.[36] Confronted with highly organized, militarily strong agrarian states, the pastoralist nomads had to reach a higher level of cohesion and develop military and political structures that would enable them to compete successfully with the agrarian state. This was particularly the case when nomads were faced with strong sedentary states that could defend themselves more effectively and therefore forced the nomads to create larger and more powerful military unions.[37]

This theory in its multiple formulations avoids both the static bipolarism of the "trade or raid" theory and the evolutionary approach based on class stratification and endemic tribal conflict, while taking into account the historical reality of a wide range of commercial, diplomatic, and military interaction between nomadic and sedentary states. There are still limits to the value of this approach, however, in that the economic relationship it portrays is still set in bipolar terms that do not necessarily represent accurately the terms of the exchange between the two component societies. Some nomads did practice limited agriculture; others traded with or extracted tribute from farming communities other than large sedentary states.[38]

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[36] A survey of various theories on the causes of the nomadic invasions of sedentary societies can be found in Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, "Beiya yumu minzu nanqin ge zhong yuanyin de jiantao," *Shihuo yuekan* 1 (1972): 1–11.

[37] Among the most eloquent contributions to this important theory are those of Anatoly Khazanov, *Nomads of the Outside World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); and Golden, "Nomads and Their Sedentary Neighbors in Pre-Činggisid Eurasia," pp. 41–81.

[38] Nicola Di Cosmo, "The Economic Basis of the Ancient Inner Asian Nomads and Its Relationship to China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1994): 1092–1126. Also, studies of traditional pastoral communities reveal that not all the people regarded as "nomadic" had the same productive basis. A comparison between Khalkha, Chahar, and Daghur Mongol communities shows economic variations that range from almost exclusive animal husbandry to different types of integration between farming and pastoralism; see Herbert Harold Vreeland, *Mongol Community and Kinship Structure* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1957).

A theory based on the chronic agricultural insufficiency of the economies of pastoral nomads, where pastoral nomadism is necessarily defined as an exclusively meat-producing economy, typically cannot account for the states erected by inner Asian peoples who were not exclusively or predominantly nomadic and yet partook of the same political tradition. In fact, examination of the state-building patterns, imperial ideology, kinship system, and ritual practices of these empires reveals no sharp demarcation lines between, say, the nomadic Mongols or Türks and the "seminomadic" Khitan, Jurchen, or Manchus.[39] Finally, if one closely scrutinizes the notion that these states emerged in tandem with strong agricultural states, one can challenge it on historical grounds. The first Türk empire emerged in the mid-sixth century A.D., a time when there was no unified strong state in China. Likewise, the Khitan state was already formed between the fall of the Tang (907) dynasty and the founding of the Song dynasty (960). The Jurchen (not a nomadic people) had no significant economic contact with the Song until after their conquest of northern China.[40] Nor was "China" (that is, the Jin dynasty) a primary protagonist in the rise of the Mongols. Even the Xiongnu empire emerged in 209 B.C., at a time when China was already on the verge of civil war, and thrived during the early Han dynasty when the political basis of the Chinese empire was still weak.[41]

Dominant Factors in the Formation of Inner Asian Empires

An exclusive focus on economic processes in isolation from the historical circumstances in which they arose, and the reduction of the political process to two rigid blocs, the "nomads" and the "agriculturalists," creates a static paradigm that obscures the complexity of the historical process of state formation. At least three different spheres of political activity can be delineated in most instances of nomadic state formation: among nomadic peoples, between nomadic peoples and the major sedentary powers, and between nomads and minor independent sedentary polities. There is a kaleidoscopic quality to the intersection of these

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[39] Among the most influential works on the cultural-economic differences among Khitan, Jin, and Yuan dynasties and their bearing on "sinicization" are the writings by Yao Congwu; see, for instance, *Yao Congwu xiansheng quanji, vol. 5: Liao Jin Yuan lunwen (shang)* (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1981).

[40] Shiba Yoshinobu, "Sung Foreign Trade: Its Scope and Organization," in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors,* ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 98.

[41] On the Xiongnu, see note 33 above, and also Nobuo Yamada, "The Formation of the Hsiung-nu Nomadic State," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36 (1982): 575–82.

spheres in each historical situation that defies hard and fast systemic theories.

I propose to examine patterns of state formation neither as a natural evolution nor as a response to the development of the state in agrarian societies, but rather as a social response to a state of crisis. The late Joseph Fletcher Jr. noted that a supratribal elite was not necessary for the management of nomadic economy.[42] In fact, given their high mobility and low density, the nomadic and seminomadic peoples of inner Asia were typically organized into kin groups whose smallest social unit was the family nucleus.[43] This social organization produced forms of political unity, the clan and the tribe, that were necessary for production, defense, migrations, and war, and were headed by members of the aristocracy who owed their privileged position to birth and personal qualities. There is a general consensus, however, that the economy of these societies was fragile and vulnerable, easily disrupted by variations in the climate and other factors.[44] The relative scarcity of resources was the source of constant interclan and intertribal struggles. Noblemen provided leadership in the organization of large hunts and raids against neighboring communities. Since extensive pastoral production supplemented by hunting and limited farming allowed little surplus and left limited margins for the formation of any class not directly involved in production, the members of the aristocracy disengaged from direct production were, under normal circumstances, few in number.[45]

The vulnerability and poverty of nomadic economy was at the root of endemic, low-level violence and chronic instability of nomadic societies. Small-scale raids upon neighboring people to steal cattle, slaves, or women were common affairs. Retaliations followed and sometimes could escalate into wars. On the eve of the appearance of empires, there is a scenario of increasing violence within the core area that would generate the state. This widespread violence, when it occurred, tore at the heart of the established social order, divided families,

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[42] Joseph Fletcher Jr., "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4, pt. 1 (1979–80): 237.

[43] Lawrence Krader, *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), pp. 316–72; Elisabeth Bacon, *Obok: A Study of Social Structure in Eurasia* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1958), pp. 106–19.

[44] On this question, see the excellent synopsis in Khazanov, *Nomads of the Outside World*, pp. 69–84.

[45] According to a census carried out in Mongolia among traditional herders in 1918, only 6 of the 401 families examined were considered to be members of the nobility, while the overwhelming majority were direct producers. See Vreeland, *Mongol Community and Kinship Structure*.

caused the abandonment of poor relatives, and broke up tribes; at the same time, these crises released new energies closely connected with state formation. The tribal order was altered so deeply that a new order could emerge, and larger political conglomerates could arise. Hence, I shall take the notion of crisis as the starting point of my analysis.

Crisis. The notion of *crisis*—that is, a general, sometimes abrupt worsening of economic, political, and social conditions, carrying with it a sense of impending change—is a key concept that can be aptly used to describe the initial phase of the historical process of state formation in inner Asia. Crises could be of different types. A severe winter, a drought, or an epidemic could reduce the size of the herds below the level sufficient to sustain the people. Overgrazing could reduce the fertility of the soil and the nutritional value of the grass, thus forcing the people to move in search of more and better land.

Economic need, however, does not automatically produce political unity. On the contrary, the more common picture among the tribal people and chiefdoms of inner Asia on the eve of the emergence of a state is one of social disaggregation, with the poorest being abandoned to their own fate and the more daring members of the tribe banding together in semilawless associations. In general, dire economic circumstances disrupted social relations, which could come very close to a state of collapse. Yet the breakdown of tribal bonds allowed for a greater degree of social mobility. Ability in leadership counted more than birth or lineage, and effective leaders could prove themselves and emerge at these times, thus becoming catalysts for new forms of political organization. A crisis of this type is described in *The Secret History of the Mongols,* where many of the key events seem to indicate a state of economic, social, and political crisis.[46] The poverty of the family of Temujin, the relative ease with which members of the tribal aristocracy could change sides and lose their status, and the appearance of "strong men" whose success was based on strategic skills and prowess in war are all elements that contrast greatly with the law and order later established by Chinggis Khan and bespeak the deep crisis of Mongol society, even though the precise nature of this crisis is not known.[47]

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[46]See F. W. Cleaves, *The Secret History of the Mongols* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[47]Without formulating a theory of the crisis as "morphogenic" agent in the emergence of the state, Khazanov finds that on the eve of the emergence of the state, "Mongolian society was obviously under stress"; see A. Khazanov, "The Early State among the Eurasian Nomads," in *The Study of the State,* p. 160.

A crisis could also be brought about by other causes. For instance, tensions between ethnic groups or between "enslaved" and "master" tribes could result in continual friction and finally explode into an all-out war, as in the case of the rebellion of the Türks against their Rouran overlord or the struggle of the Jurchen against the Khitan. In both cases subaltern or tributary peoples fought against a dominant "tribe" and became the new power in the region.[48] Vexatious policies by the overlords could create a crisis of legitimation among the tribal elite of the tributary group; this crisis could then push at least a segment of the aristocracy to challenge the established elite and to rally around a "charismatic" leader.

An example of the delegitimation of the traditional elite can be seen in the emergence of the Xiongnu empire. Here the crisis was ignited by the invasion of the nomadic homeland by the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.), whose large army proceeded to occupy and settle the land. The new leader Maodun (r. 209–174 B.C.) established himself after having gathered a group of loyal followers and killed his father. This episode points not just to an instance of usurpation but to the challenge brought by one group of young warriors to the established tribal elite.[49] Only after the Xiongnu were able to reorganize themselves was the crisis overcome. Interestingly enough, even though other nomadic groups were flourishing while the Xiongnu had to bear the brunt of the Qin invasion, it was the latter who eventually defeated all their nomadic foes and created a "state."[50] The point is that if the crisis was deep enough and a sufficient number of people were affected by it, it could result in the creation of alternative centers of political power that were external and in opposition to the traditional tribal aristocracy, and that were represented by young, dispossessed members of the nobility and their following of loyal warriors. Although not all crises led to state formation, a crisis is often observed before the emergence of the state.

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[48] On the various nomadic groups active in the steppe region on the eve of the rise of the Türks, see the summary in L. R. Kyzlasov, "Northern Nomads," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* vol. 3: *The Crossroads of Civilizations: A.D. 250 to 750,* ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al. (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), pp. 320–24. On the Jurchen rebellion against the Khitan, see Herbert Franke, "The Chin Dynasty," in *Cambridge History of China,* vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States (907–1368),* ed. Denis Twitchett and Herbert Franke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 219–20.

[49] On Maodun's rise, see Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian,* trans. Burton Watson, 3 vols. (1961; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2:134.

[50] According to the sources, "the Eastern Hu were strong and the Yuezhi were flourishing" when the then head of the Xiongnu, Tumen, was unable to beat the Qin, and fled north. See *Shiji,* 10 vols. (1959; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 9:2887; Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian,* 2:134.

Militarization. A key aspect of a "crisis" is the militarization of a pastoral society that it produces. Although it is true that members of "nomadic type" groups were accustomed from childhood to the use of arms, it is not true that they were constantly engaged in war. Armed conflicts were normally limited to raiding an enemy camp or battling among feuding clans. In the case of a crisis scenario, however, the mobilization for war meant the creation of actual standing armies and the proliferation of military leaders. Every male able to fight became a soldier and engaged in long campaigns against nomadic foes or against the regular troops of sedentary states. The creation of centrally controlled bodyguard units constituted another element of militarization.[51]

It has been calculated that at the time of Chinggis Khan's rise to power, the total number of adult males fit for military service was no more than 50,000–100,000 people; yet the size of the Mongol army in 1206 has been estimated at over 100,000, which means, if the estimates are even approximately correct, that practically every adult male had been drafted into a centralized military apparatus.[52] The creation of imperial bodyguard units constituted another element of militarization. Bodyguard corps, usually very large, were meant to strengthen the personal power of the khan. According to the legend of the foundation of the Xiongnu empire (209–60 B.C.), the earliest known inner Asian bodyguard unit goes back to the corps of loyal followers of the ruler Maodun.[53] The Uighur *khaghan* had a personal guard of 1,000 warriors.[54] Abaoji (r. 907–26), founder of the Khitan empire, created a personal standing army in 922. This later became the core of the *ordo* army, an elite corps under the direct command of the emperor whose primary task was the protection of the ruler's person.[55] Among the Khazars,

[51]Within Kerait khanate İsenbike Togan identifies the khan's followers *(nökör)* and the subject peoples as groups whose military obligations were central to their relationship with the khan. They provided "guards" and "common soldiers" as households that had a direct link with the ruling family. See İsenbike Togan, *Flexibility and Limitations in Steppe Formations* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 111.

[52]Valery P. Alekseev, "Some Aspects of the Study of Productive Forces in the Empire of Chengiz Khan," in *Rulers from the Steppe,* ed. Seaman and Marks, p. 191; Desmond H. Martin, *The Rise of Chingis Khan and His Conquest of North China* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950), pp. 12–15; Desmond H. Martin, "The Mongol Army," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1943): 46–85.

[53]Berthold Laufer, *Chinese Clay Figures: Part I: Prolegomena on the History of Defensive Armor,* Field Museum Publication 177 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1914), pp. 224–27.

[54]Christopher Beckwith, "The Central Asian Guard Corps," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 35.

[55]Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1115)* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1946), pp. 508–17.

where the figure of the khan had gradually lost its political role and acquired apotropaic and ceremonial functions, the actual power-holder, the Īšā had a royal army of 10,000 horsemen.[56] Finally, Chinggis Khan's personal bodyguard, the *kesik*, instituted in 1203–1204, initially comprised only 80 day guards and 70 night guards. In 1206, however, after he had received his sacral investiture, the number swelled to 10,000 people.[57]

Some theorists regard militarization as one of the determining factors in state formation.[58] According to Andreski's typology of societies on the basis of their military organization, inner Asian societies on the eve of state formation were characterized by a high "military participation ratio," a low degree of "subordination," and a high degree of "cohesion." Intensive and lengthy warfare could produce a higher degree of subordination, resulting in a "widely conscriptive" society characterized by a high "military participation ratio," a high degree of "subordination," and a high level of "cohesion."[59]

This definition fits the social situation found among nomadic-type inner Asian peoples on the eve of state formation, but it needs to be taken one step further. In a situation of "noncrisis," conflicts were limited, even though military participation was high, as most men engaged in defense, hunting, and raiding. During the period of "crisis," however, military ventures became for a large part of the male population a regular, professional activity. Members of defeated enemy tribes were incorporated into the "charismatic" khan's tribe, the level of subordination rose, ranks were established, and commanders were appointed.[60] Together with the increase in subordination, there is also a

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[56] Peter Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), p. 98.

[57] Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao, *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty*, Harvard East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 33–38.

[58] R. L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science* 169 (1970): 733–38.

[59] Stanislav Andreski [Andrzejewski], *Military Organization and Society* (1954; reprint, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 150–51.

[60] *Tribe* is a potentially controversial term that requires a few words of explanation. Although some scholars in fields such as African studies reject the use of the term because of either its cultural connotations or its multiple and therefore imprecise and ambiguous usages, terms such as *tribal elite, tribal confederacy*, and simply *tribe* are very commonly used in the historical literature on the Eurasian nomads. A study of the political terminology of inner Asian empires has not yet been produced, but in general *tribe* has one meaning: a large group of people recognizable by a single ethnonym and possibly united by blood ties and kin relations. It is widely believed, however, that the inner Asian "tribe" was preeminently a political formation that incorporated, under the fictive notion of common genealogies, the participants in a common political project. See Rudi Paul Lindner, "What Was a Nomadic Tribe?" *Comparative Study of Society and History* 24 (1982): 689–711; Hilda Ecsedy, "Tribe and Tribal Society in the 6th [*sic*] Century Turk Empire," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 25 (1972): 245–62.

qualitative difference in the type of military participation found. Moreover, the new military aristocracy climbed in the new social order to a higher position and claimed privileges that not only created a deeper cleavage between it and the rest of society, but also were costly and increased the overall rate of consumption while production most probably decreased. It is only logical to assume that the higher ratio of people regularly engaged in military activities negatively affected production and produced a pressure toward the acquisition of external resources.[61]

The Charismatic Leader and Sacral Investiture. In a setting of social and economic crisis, the military aristocracy was able to increase its social relevance and political power. During a crisis several leaders would emerge and strive to create a new order, thereby restoring peace; they were usually junior members of the tribal aristocracy vying for power. The competition revolved around the ability of the leader and his close military associates to defend the interests of the tribe. If successful, the leader would attract the support of several other tribes. As in the case of the Xiongnu—by no means unique—the qualities possessed by leaders who were able to create large confederations included individual ambition, sheer military ability, personal charisma, and a contemptuous disregard for traditional rules of seniority. When the members of the aristocracy finally raised the winner to the position of supreme leader, they also formally relinquished their authority and submitted to him.

The investiture of a "supratribal" leader was "sacral" in the sense that it conferred on the khan the right to define himself as "protected by Heaven" or "appointed by Heaven."[62] Through such an investiture

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[61]In the words of İsenbike Togan, political centralization under Chinggis Khan was carried out through a process of detribalization, which meant, among other things, that "tribal populations who for the most part still depended on pastoral production for their subsistence transformed themselves or were transformed into a more or less uniform army of conquest." One of the goals of detribalization, in fact, was to create an army of conquest that could be mobilized to carry out "long range operations (conquests)"; see İsenbike Togan, *Flexibility and Limitations in Steppe Formation,* pp. 137–38. Although the argument is not made by Togan, we must assume that these social transformations and the mass mobilization of the army could not but affect the economic balance in the sense of reducing the volume of tribal economy and thus placing increased economic pressures on the center to supply this professionalized army with sufficient sources of livelihood. The redistribution of loot by itself does not necessarily guarantee the regular flow of revenues necessary to support a standing army.

[62]On the concept of sacral emperorship in inner Asia, see note 26 above. See also Jean-Paul Roux, "L'origine céleste de la souveraineté dans les inscriptions paléo-turques de Mongolie et de Sibérie," in *The Sacral Kingship* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), pp. 231–41; Mori Masao,

the authority of the assembly that elected the leader (such as the Mongol *khuriltai*) was transferred to the person of the khan, who thereby became the supreme chief endowed with divine "charisma." Although the appointment of the khan was not limited to a specified period or to the solution of the crisis, in some cases a system was adopted that indicates an attempt to confine special supratribal powers to a certain time span. The early Türks had the custom during the investiture ceremony of depriving the khan of air by strangulation until he reached a state of semi-unconsciousness, at which point he was asked how long his reign would be. The period of his "dictatorship" was supposed to last the number of years "murmured" by the khan.[63] The Khazars had a similar procedure, and if the reign lasted longer than a set period (forty years), the ruler was killed.[64] In most cases, however, no such limitation existed, and the ruler's power, ideally, would last throughout his life.

The sacral investiture points to the existence of an "ideology in reserve" that was activated under special circumstances.[65] In its actual political and symbolic enactment, the "supratribal" ideology was not developed *ex-novo* every time an inner Asian empire came into existence. Several studies have pointed out that the empires set up by steppe nomads consciously adopted institutions, rituals, and other forms of political legitimation that had already been developed by earlier empires.[66] The *translatio imperii* enacted by resuming an ideology of imperial unity was an occurrence dominated by pragmatic, selective choices whereby archaic notions of sovereignty blended with native cults, new insitutions, and *ad* hoc borrowings from other political traditions meant to reinforce the power of the central authority. By requiring uncondi-

"The T'u-chüeh Concept of Sovereign," *Acta Asiatica* 41 (1981): 47–75; Osman Turan, "The Ideal of World Dominion among the Medieval Türks," *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955): 77–90. For a comparison of Chinese and inner Asian concepts of emperorship, see Pamela Crossley, "The Rulerships of China," *American Historical Review* 97 (1992): 1468–83.

[63]Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-Küe)*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958), 1:8.

[64]Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:42, 99. In the passage quoted on p. 99, however, it is said that the length of the rule of the king of the Khazars was a fixed term of forty years, and that, if this term was exceeded, subjects and courtiers would kill the monarch.

[65]For the notion of an "ideology in reserve" in nomadic societies, see Philip Carl Salzman, "Introduction" in *When Nomads Settle*, ed. Salzman (New York: Praeger, 1980).

[66]On the translatio imperii and transmission of political legitimacy in inner Asia, see P. B. Golden, "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity Amongst the Pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 37–76; and Thomas Allsen, "Spiritual Geography and Political Legitimacy in the Eastern Steppe," in *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, ed. Henri Claessen and Jarich G. Oosten (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 116–35.

tional subordination to the emperor and to the imperial clan, this new ideology reoriented social and political relations from horizontal to vertical and from semi-egalitarian to hierarchical.[67] The activation of this notion radically transformed the political landscape of steppe society, altered social and economic relations, and affected deeply the principles of military and civil organization. The emergence of the charismatic leader meant a replacement of the clan nobility with a much more powerful, hieratic, and autocratic form of authority where collegial decisions were restricted to a small group of people. Yet the tribal aristocracy generally did not submit unconditionally and instead tried to preserve independent powers with which to counterbalance the tendentiously absolute authority of the khan. The conflict between the localistic interests represented by the tribal aristocracy and the central authority represents one of the great themes of inner Asian history. The first step taken by the khan was, in fact, that of creating a central structure of civil and military government.

I do not mean to suggest that inner Asian history can be seen as a pendulumlike oscillation between state and nonstate. The "ideology in reserve" is, for me, a useful term to suggest the latent possibility of the state, made possible by the willing consent of tribal components to alienate part of their power for the greater good of the resolution of the crisis. The shape that the state would take, however, depended on the specific circumstances of its historical emergence. Although a series of states emerged in inner Asian history, they were all different, and this very difference is inevitably obscured by representing them in any cyclical or pendular scheme.

Centralized Government Structure. After the appointment of the khan, a new political apparatus would take shape, composed of permanently mobilized armies, supratribal administration of justice, and a body of imperially appointed military and civil officials. The khan needed to ensure the loyalty of the people and the establishment of a warless state (the *pax nomadica*) of which the royal clan would be the guarantor, but first he needed to consolidate his power. This was achieved first by placing trusted members of the royal clan and loyal military leaders in the highest positions, and then by monopolizing revenues and redistributing them to the tribal aristocracy. The military

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[67] On the bipolar opposition between the collegial, almost socialistic relations that existed in the tribal society and the emergence of a hierarchical, individualistic set of class relations that emerged with the birth of an inner Asian state, see Krader, "The Origin of the State among the Nomads of Asia," pp. 100–101.

expansion that followed the establishment of the new statelike polity was part of the formative process of the state itself, since it allowed both the acquisition of the means to reward military leaders and the organization of a new hierarchy on the basis of the personal relationship between the khan and his followers. The upper "executive" structure of the state was always dominated by the clan of the dynastic founder. The initial collegiality of the political process that promoted the sacral investiture would gradually be replaced by a government apparatus whose upper layer was dominated by members of the imperial and consort clans, and the lower ones by members of the aristocracy. The authority of the latter was directly proportional to the distance between their lineages and the royal clan—a distance determined by the political process and subject to constant change.

Some of the perquisites of power inherent in the previous, acephalous system, such as the principle of hereditary succession and the right to exaction of tribute, were transferred to the "supratribal," state level and claimed by the charismatic clan. Once the dynastic founder had been raised, however, tribalism was reinstated to some extent by consolidating the power and prestige of the founder's own clan. After the death of the founder, the *translatio* of divinely granted imperial power by inheritance, rather than by acclamation, could be regarded as usurpation of the political prerogatives of the tribal aristocracy. Members of the aristocracy could voice their disapproval by seceding or by supporting a different "charismatic" leader, often a member of the royal clan. According to Fletcher's interpretation, succession wars were necessary as a system of selection of the leader.[68] The outcome of wars of succession depended on the leader's ability to secure a constant flow of revenues to reward the aristocracy and allow them to retain wealth and prestige in exchange for loyalty, and also to maintain large central armies. "Nativistic" challenges could be confronted successfully by the center provided it had access to sufficient economic resources. A well-known example of "nativistic" challenge is the struggle between Ariɣ Böke and Qubilai from 1260 to 1266 for control of the Mongol *ulus* ("state", "country"); Qubilai won thanks to the huge reservoir of resources at his disposal in China.[69]

The consolidation of the supreme power of the khan required that hereditary positions based on lineage be increasingly replaced with

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[68] Joseph Fletcher Jr., "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4, pt. 1 (1979–80): 236–51.

[69] Morris Rossabi, *Qubilai: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 53–62.

direct appointments based on merit and personal loyalty, and that a growing proportion of the armed people be organized into permanent fighting units and placed under the direct control of the khan or royal clan. The creation of the state, then, did not produce a demobilization of military aristocracy and soldiery. On the contrary, it increased the size of the army and turned part-time soldiers into full-time soldiers. In addition, as the royal clan strengthened its hold on power, the personal retinues of its high-ranking members tended to become larger and larger. Members of the elite had residences renowned for their "barbaric splendor," equipped with extensive personal retinues of servants and bodyguards; the frequent struggles for succession must have persuaded the potential candidates to retain control of as many personal troops as possible. Compared with the resources produced within their own economic bases, the political centers of steppe empires were enormously expensive.[70] The first "cry" of a newly born inner Asian state was one of great, insatiable hunger.

Revenues and Territorial Expansion. According to tribal custom, the traditional aristocracy exacted a tribute from commoners and from subordinate or enslaved tribes, thereby appropriating the limited surplus that pastoral nomadism could produce. In the "imperial" situation, however, the militarization of society and growth of an aristocratic class and state apparatus, together with a possibly stagnant or even recessional economy, required far greater resources than those available within the society's own productive sphere. The raiding parties, swollen in numbers to the size of fully fledged armies, not only looted the frontiers of the "sown," but launched invasions aimed at acquiring large amounts of external resources. A few examples: the Xiongnu started to exact from China almost immediately (198 B.C.) silk floss, clothes, grain, and other foodstuffs each year;[71] the first Türk empire (552–630) under Muhan *qaɣan* (r. 553–72) received a tribute of 100,000 bales of silk from the Northern Zhou (557–81) court;[72]

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[70] Visiting the court of Sartaq, son of the ruler of the Golden Horde, Batu, William of Rubruck noted that each of his six wives had a large dwelling and 200 wagons. See Peter Jackson and David Morgan, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990), p. 114.

[71] Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, 2:139. See also Yü Ying-shih, *Trade and Expansion in Han China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 41.

[72] Patrizia Cannata, *Profilo storico del primo impero turco (metà VI–metà VII secolo)* (Rome: Istituto di Studi dell'India e dell'Asia Orientale, 1981), p. 49. On the early relations between the Türks and China, see Hilda Ecsedy, "Trade-and-war Relations between the Turks and China in the Second Half of the 6th [*sic*] Century," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 21 (1968): 131–80.

early Mongol attacks in northern China against the Jin were primarily aimed at acquiring booty in the form of gold, silk, and horses (1213).[73] The type and amount of resources appropriated in each instance reflect deeper changes in the productive and political structure of the inner Asian society in question. By monopolizing revenues, the khan in question tried to pay for the maintenance, rewards, and stipends of the state apparatus, the aristocratic elite, and the army.

Since the contours of the new state were always rather nebulous, there was, at least in theory, no limit to the people and territory that could be incorporated in the economy of the state as subordinate units or tribute bearers. The first type of "state" appropriation consisted of tribute. Tribute could be of two kinds, which may be referred to as "internal" and "external." Internal tribute was paid by subordinate political units, which could be nomadic tribes, smaller principalities, or city-states that acknowledged the overlordship of the khan and typically were forced to provide the center with yearly payments in kind and with military support. Such was the case for the Türks in the Rouran empire, who specialized in metallurgy and probably provided their overlords with iron implements; in addition, on the eve of their rebellion, they attacked and defeated the Tiele, enemies of the Rouran.[74] Likewise, the Jurchen were a subordinate people of the Khitan, to whom they had to deliver valuable products from their country, such as pearls, hunting falcons, and sable furs.[75] These tribes or communities retained a separate identity from the dominant polity and occupied a lower rank in the configuration of the state.

External tribute was obtained from large sedentary states, such as Byzantine Rome, Persia, or China. The tribute relationship would be regulated through treaties, and the peace terms would include mutual recognition of equal diplomatic status even when the sedentary state was forced to pay tribute. In either case, the tributary system had limits because it made the political system overly dependent on external factors. Considering the chronic instability of the political process, the uncertainties of succession, and the tensions between the authority of the sovereign and the autonomistic tendencies of the aristocracy, a state whose economic viability depended solely on tribute was bound

[73] Thomas Allsen, "The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China," in *Cambridge History of China,* vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States (907–1368),* ed. Twitchett and Franke, p. 351.

[74] Denis Sinor, "The Establishment and Dissolution of the Türk Empire," in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia,* ed. Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 295–96.

[75] Franke, "The Chin Dynasty," p. 220.

to face an immediate crisis as soon as the volatile tribute revenues, only indirectly controlled by the inner Asian state, declined or disappeared.

A second source of revenue was trade, which was secured by forging partnerships with merchant communities specializing in long-distance trade.[76] To be sure, trade existed in the absence of a strong inner Asian polity, in which case commercial networks would be relatively inchoate and conducted at the tribal level on the basis of the tribe's own set of "foreign affairs." When dealing with China, foreign communities often accepted a subordinate position in order to enjoy the benefits of trade. At the supratribal level, however, trade assumed a different form. Large gains could not be secured from local barter trade; participation in the intercontinental trade routes yielded much greater profits and was easier to control through the military backing provided by the inner Asian state. Moreover, traditional trade of nomadic products became especially profitable when the inner Asian centers could impose a monopoly and make the demand for inner Asian products—such as horses—higher than the supply, thus tipping the economic balance on their side.[77]

But a far more reliable form of income was the regular taxation of subjects, in particular sedentary ones. The Liao dynasty devised a system whereby, thanks to a dual administration, it could extract revenues directly from the settled people of the areas it had conquered while retaining its essentially northern, tribal, and nomadic character. Unlike the Toba rulers of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), who jettisoned their inner Asian heritage and turned their state into a full-fledged Chinese polity, the Khitan experiment of rulership injected a new element into a fundamentally inner Asian system of government.[78] The Jin and Yuan followed in the Khitans' path and, as they expanded territorially into lands occupied by agricultural peoples, adopted multiple forms of fiscal administration.

In the later states of inner Asian origin, the search for tax revenues proceeded in parallel with the process of strengthening the central authority, but success was not uniform. One of the main differences

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[76]On the trade partnership between Türks and Sogdians, see B. A. Litvinsky and Zhang Guang-da [*sic*], "Historical Introduction," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:32.

[77]This seems to have been the case in relation to trade between the Uighurs and the Tang dynasty. See Colin Mackerras, "Sino-Uighur Diplomatic and Trade Contacts (744–840)," *Central Asiatic Journal* 13 (1969): 215–39.

[78]On the Northern Wei state and society, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Das Toba-Reich Nord Chinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1949).

among the four postconquest Mongol khanates was the different degree of integration among tributary revenues, trade-derived revenues, and the revenues obtained through direct taxation of urban and rural communities. In the presence of developed bureaucratic networks and skilled administrators who emerged from within the defeated states to assist in the process of financial centralization (as was the case in China and Persia), fiscal policies tended to become less rapacious and erratic, and uneasy forms of coexistence developed between rulers and ruled. Yet the Mongols took from the general population far more than they provided, and the administration continued to be beset by the tremendous financial burden of a congeries of court apparatuses; ethnic, religious, and class privileges; and a largely unproductive military apparatus. Even greater reliance on taxation can be seen in the case of the Manchu and Ottoman empires, which succeeded in creating an essentially stable balance both between state management and extraction of surplus and between conquerors and conquered.

The different ways in which inner Asian supratribal polities interacted with their neighbors has often led to the formulation of various typologies. Forms of domination of nomads over rural and urban populations have been qualified according to the following models: looting, tribute relations, fixed taxation, integration of some agricultural groups into the dependent population of the conquered society, expropriation of landed property and exploitation of peasants.[79] Here we can recognize several elements mentioned above, such as tribute and taxes, but they are seen as variations on a basic theme—that is, nomadic aggressions driven by a perennial economic need. Cast in a historical perspective, inner Asian state formations (which are not exclusively "nomadic") display a gradual but sure tendency to forge more and more sophisticated means of access to external resources. Of course, we cannot speak of a linear and seamless continuum, especially since different empires adopted different "civil" traditions, but we can still observe, though it was fragmented and uneven, the incremental aspect of the effectiveness of inner Asian rulerships in expanding their resource basis.

Toward a Periodization of Inner Asian History

Let us return now to the issue of periodization. The aim of this essay is not to offer a new comprehensive theory of state formation in inner

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[79] Anatolii Khazanov, "The Early State among the Eurasian Nomads," in *The Study of the State*, p. 163.

Asia. Rather, it is to focus on those factors most frequently observed at times in which states do emerge, factors that are both endogenous (crisis, militarization, and so forth) and exogenous (the acquisition of externally produced surplus). By this means we may identify a principle that allows for a meaningful periodization of inner Asian history, or, more properly, of the history of inner Asian empires.

It seems to me that such a principle can be found in the states' incremental ability to gain access to revenues external to their productive basis. This ability was coeval with the emergence of the state apparatus and provided the basis for its survival, for foreign relations, for the projection of force beyond its political and territorial boundaries, and for the domination of different ethnic, linguistic, and economic communities. How a state managed to acquire external revenues is thus, in my opinion, a valid internal criterion to establish a preliminary periodization of the history of inner Asian empires. On this basis, four major periods can be identified, characterized respectively by tribute, trade partnerships, dual administration, and direct taxation.

It needs to be stressed, however, that the development of different strategies of state-controlled access to resources should not be understood in a strictly evolutionistic way. The process is more horizontal than it is vertical, and earlier forms employed by inner Asian rulers to access the resources of external societies are not necessarily replaced *in toto* during the following "stage." Rather, through a process observable but as yet not fully understood, inner Asian polities display the ability to expand their strategies without renouncing earlier ones. Empires who became engaged in international trade did not renounce tribute relations, and those who conquered and taxed their sedentary populations continued actively to promote trade and reap profits in the process. Moreover, and most importantly, the "gains" of certain polities were fully reversible. The inner Asian polity was always at risk of dissolving and returning to a condition of nonstate, or of returning to a state that was not able to resume the level of economic capacity previously attained. For instance, although the ideal of the re-creation of the Mongol empire remained alive, the eastern Mongols enacted a tribute-trade economic strategy in their relations with the Ming dynasty.[80] "Gains" in the management of resources and the implementation of an advanced mode of conquest and domination, such as that

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[80] Henry Serruys, "Four Documents Relating to the Sino-Mongol Peace of 1570–71," *Monumenta Serica* 19 (1910): 1–66.

embodied in the Chinggisid states of the thirteenth century, remained in a "virtual" or incipient state among the Mongols of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Only when some specific historical conditions, to which we have alluded above, allowed for the establishment and successful expansion of an inner Asian polity, the "traditionary" material represented by earlier experiences of state-building would be tapped into, and the possiblility of a further qualitative increase of economic management became a possibility. The Manchus of Nurhaci and Hung Taiji consciously appealed to the thirteenth-century Chinggisid tradition of rulership as they began to expand their state into Chinese-inhabited areas. In other words, even though reversals occurred, and inner Asian peoples resorted to purely tributary or even predatory access to external resources even after sophisticated models of governance had emerged, there is a diachronic element in the emergence of these models that needs to be extracted from the serial account of historical experiences, and impressed with a distinct and original vlalue. This value, identifiable in an incremental complexity and expanding range of solutions to issues of governance, is key to understanding the progressive relevance of nomadic empires in world history, and the distinct success of dynasties of inner Asian derivation in early modern times, such as the Qing and the Ottoman empires. This is proposed here as the "core value" for a periodization of inner Asian history.[81]

Of necessity, this periodization is based on a macroscopic view that cannot account for all types of social, political, and cultural change. The break points indicated here refer exclusively to changes in the ability of inner Asian polities to seek and obtain more, and more secure, sources of external revenues because such a flow was essential to the stability of the ruling class. Such transitions provide a sequence

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[81] In a celebrated article, published posthumously, the late Joseph Fletcher Jr. proposed the adoption of an "integrative horizontal macrohistory" as the aptest way to study the early modern period (1500–1800). This model, centered on the search for historical connections across geographical areas and sets of events perceived as separate and even isolated from one another, gives full relevance to inner Asia's place in world history. This model is particularly fitting as we look for the evolution of articulations and ramifications of historical phenomena (trade, communications, technology, financial management, and so on) leading to greater integration on a global scale. Integrative macrohistory, however, does not deny the existence of dynamics of *longue durée* within societies constituted as separate historical and cultural units. Hence, Fletcher's appeal, echoed in more recent scholarship, while rightly seeking to give historical meaning to interregional and inter-civilizational processes, is not *per se* antithetical to approaches that emphasize a different level of analysis, grounded in a regional (but not necessarily insular) frame of historical change. See Joseph Fletcher Jr., "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 87–57.

and a unified frame but do not reveal the essential nature of the change itself—much like the rungs of a ladder that remains to be climbed. It is hoped that these transitions can be used as a basis for future research.

Tribute Empires (209 B.C.–A.D. 551)

The dawn of historically recorded "steppe" empires occurs in the east. The process of state formation of the Xiongnu empire is well documented in the Chinese sources. External revenues available to the court were limited to tribute and were received from China or from vanquished peoples, such as the Wuhuan or the city-states of the Tarim Basin.[82] As long as extra revenues could be skimmed, the authority of the *shanyu* (a Xiongnu title equivalent to the Chinese emperor) could be preserved. China put an end to the Xiongnu empire by ceasing to present the annual tribute and by engaging in a long war of extensive but seldom decisive military expeditions. The coup de grâce was delivered when the Chinese managed to cut off the "right arm" of the Xiongnu—that is, when they won the battle over the Western Regions where small, sedentary oasis-states had been paying tribute to the nomads for decades.[83] The complete deprivation of external resources sealed the fate of the Xiongnu by reducing the power of the leadership and bringing about the onset of a process of political disintegration. At that point the bond that kept the supratribal elite together was broken, the Xiongnu split into southern and northern halves (60 B.C.), and a process of tribalization set in. In 53 B.C. the southern Xiongnu accepted subordination to China but continued to receive revenues in exchange for peace. They preserved for some time the structure of a unified, supratribal state even in that condition of military and political inferiority, although the leadership grew weaker and more vulnerable to challenge.[84]

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[82] Yü Ying-shih, "The Hsiung-nu," in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia,* ed. Sinor, pp. 125–28.

[83] A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Quelques considèrations sur le commerce de la soie au temps de la dynastie des Han," in *Mèlanges de sinologie offerts à Paul Demièville,* 2 vols., Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises 20 (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1974), 2:117–35.

[84] After the breakup of the Xiongnu empire into a southern and northern branch, the southern Xiongnu leadership managed to retain a supratribal power, though much less extensive, also thanks to changes in the succession system; on this, see Rafe de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier: The Policies and Strategy of the Later Han Empire* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984), pp. 190–91, 510–11n.32. On the southern Xiongnu, see also Yü Ying-shih, "The Hsiung-nu," pp. 138–44.

The Xiongnu empire was followed by other, more or less successful inner Asian polities that achieved a greater or lesser degree of cohesion and "statelike" appearance. Among these the most important were the Wuhuan, the Qiang, the Xianbi, and the Rouran.[85] The collapse of Chinese dynasties in northern China in the fourth century A.D. and the fragmentation of political power allowed several nomadic peoples to establish potentates and small states, which were usually rather ephemeral. The only durable one, the Northern Wei dynasty, cannot be seen as part of the inner Asian political tradition since the court, through a structural alliance with the Chinese landed gentry, pursued a policy altogether at variance with, and even inimical to, its inner Asian tribal constituency.

Trade-tribute Empires (551–907)

Most states that derived their revenues from tribute were inherently vulnerable to both internal rebellion and external manipulation. The second period, which began with the foundation of the first Türk empire (551) and ended with the rise of the Khitan (907), differs from the first on account of the intense involvement of inner Asian "nomadic type" polities in trade (both long-distance intercontinental trade and state-controlled border markets and tributary trade). The most important polities in this period were the Türks (first empire, 552–630; second empire, 682–745), the Tibetans (618–842), the Uighurs (744–840), and, in the west, the Khazars (c. 630–965).[86] The foreign relations and territorial expansion of these states seem to indicate a strong preference for establishing forms of centralized control over trade with China and over the trade routes and rich mercantile cities of the key bottleneck of the Tarim Basin.[87] In the west, the Khazars

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[85]On the Qiang, see Rafe de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier;* on the Xianbi, see Jennifer Holmgren, *Annals of Tai: Early T'o-pa History according to the First Chapter of the* Wei shu (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982). On the Xianbi (Hsien-pi) and Rouran (Juan-juan), see also L. R. Kyslasov, "Northern Nomads," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:318–22.

[86]On the Tibetan empire, see Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Peter Golden provides an excellent summary of Khazar history in "The Peoples of the South Russian Steppes," in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia,* ed. Sinor, pp. 263–70.

[87]Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia,* pp. 179–80; Zhang Guang-da, "The City-states of the Tarim Basin," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:290–92; J. Harmatta and B. A. Litvinsky, "Tokharistan and Gandhara under Western Türk Rule (650–750)," in *History of the Civilizations of Central*

formed a close relationship with merchant communities and, thanks to their advantageous geographical location astride trade routes, became a prosperous commercial state.[88]

Although these polities also relied on tribute, this was no longer the only, and perhaps not even the main, source of their externally derived revenues. The special relationship that developed between central Asian merchants, in particular Sogdians, and the inner Asian polities is of central importance to understanding this phenomenon. The Sogdians had been for centuries among the most prominent players in the organization of long-distance trade.[89] A convergence of interests between Türk rulers and Sogdian merchants was at the root of the opening of Türk-Byzantine relations in A.D. 567.[90] In addition to striving for control of transcontinental trade, inner Asian polities centralized border trade, in particular the horse trade upon which China had become increasingly dependent.[91] The religious influence acquired by the Manichean clergy among the Uighur elite also speaks of the close connection between the Uighurs and the central Asian merchant community.[92] Yet these empires remained an essentially feeble political creation beset by growing military classes.[93] The charismatic leader held the reins of the state in much the same way the

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Asia, ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:367–83; Mu Shun-yung and Wang Yao, "The Western Regions (Hsi-yü) under the T'ang Empire and the Kingdom of Tibet," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:349–65.

[88] Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies: An historico-philological inquiry into the origins of the Khazars* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1: 107–11.

[89] On the history of Sogdiana, see B. I. Marschak and N. N. Negmatov, "Sogdiana," in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:233–39. Apparently during the Han dynasty the Xiongnu invaded Sogdiana; cf. Kazuo Enoki, "Sogdiana and the Hsiung-nu," *Central Asiatic Journal* 1 (1955): 61.

[90] For the relations between Byzantium and the Türks, see E. Dolbhofer, *Byzantinische Diplomaten und östlische Barbaren. Aus den* Excerpta de legationibus *des Konstantinos Porphirogennetos ausgewählte Abschnitte des Priskos und Menander Protektor* (Graz, 1955); K. Hannestad, "Les relations de Byzance avec la Transcaucasie et l'Asie Centrale aux 5e et 6e siècles," *Byzantion* 25–27 (1955–57): 421–56.

[91] Larry Moses, "T'ang Tribute Relations with the Inner Asian Barbarian," in *Essays on T'ang Society,* ed. John Curtis Perry and Bardwell L. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 61–89; Colin P. Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire according to the T'ang Dynastic Histories: A Study in Sino-Uighur Relations 744–840* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972).

[92] On the spread of Manicheism in central Asia, see Ph. Gignoux and B. A. Litvinsky, "Religions and Religious Movements—I", in *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia,* ed. Litvinsky et al., 3:416–20. On the Manicheans in the Tarim Basin, see Van Tangerloo, "La structure de la communauté manichéenne dans le Turkestan chinois à la lumière des emprunts moyen-iraniens en Ouigour," *Central Asiatic Journal* 26 (1982): 262–87.

[93] On the proliferation of the Türk aristocracy, see Michael Drompp, "Supernumerary Sovereigns: Superfluity and Mutability in the Elite Power Structure of the Early Türks (Tujue)," in *Rulers from the Steppe,* ed. Seaman and Marks, pp. 92–115.

Xiongnu leaders had in the past, and his power was stable only as long as the state could receive tribute and control the trade routes.[94] Both tasks, however, proved difficult, and the long list of raiding expeditions against China suggests that tributary and trade revenues never truly sufficed to supply the state.[95]

Dual-administration Empires (907–1259)

The defining trait of this period is the acquisition of knowledge and administrative skills in order to manage the government of sedentary areas. In this process, altogether new forms of government were put to work, combining a nomadic political culture with forms of direct control over the resources of sedentary peoples. Trade and tribute remained important, but an increasing proportion of revenues came from the direct taxation of sedentary peoples.

Most prominent in this period are the Khitan Liao (907–1125) and the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) dynasties. Both achieved limited territorial expansion into agricultural areas. The predominant type of government was based on a system whereby the settled and the nomadic populations were administered separately, according to principles rooted in their own societies and economies. The Tangut Xi Xia state (c. 982–1227) stayed closer in its model of governance to the polities of the previous period and relied on trade taxes provided by the Uighur merchants who crossed Tangut territory, though there is evidence that the Tanguts, too, developed forms of dual administration.[96]

Most of the "dual" administrative concepts were evolved by the Liao dynasty, which successfully occupied and defended sedentary areas, including the Manchu-Korean state of Bohai and the northern Chinese "sixteen prefectures."[97] After their swift victory against the Liao, the Jurchen swept south and conquered a much larger portion of Chinese territory than had previously been occupied by the Khitans. In the territory south of the former Liao-Song border, a large majority of the population of the Jin dynasty was Chinese, while in the territory to the

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[94] On Türk emperorship, see Mori Masao, "The T'u-chüeh Concept of Sovereign," *Acta Asiatica* 41 (1981): 47–75.

[95] Hayashi Toshio, "The Development of a Nomadic Empire: The Case of the Ancient Turks (Tujue)," *Bulletin of the Ancient Orient Museum* 11 (1990): 164–84.

[96] Ruth Dunnell, "The Hsi Hsia," in *The Cambridge History of China,* vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368,* ed. Twitchett and Franke, p. 180; Mary Ferenczy, "Dual Economy in the Tangut Empire on the Basis of the Chinese Sources," in *Études tibetaines,* ed. Ariane McDonald (Paris, 1976), pp. 4–7.

[97] Tao Jing-shen, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), pp. 10–24.

north the population was mostly tribal Khitan and Jurchen. The different ratio between conquerors and conquered is certainly responsible for many of the differences between the Liao and the Jin. While the Liao court remained very closely connected with the Khitan tribal military basis and kept its center of power in inner Asia, the Jin tapped more deeply into the possibilities offered by the Chinese administrative structure and moved the state's centers of economic and political power to the sedentary areas. Both Liao and Jin coupled their revenues from nomadic and especially sedentary people with tribute received from the Song court and with revenues from trade.[98] For the Jurchen, the overwhelming importance of direct taxes from the farmers, which gave true stability and solid financial backing to the dynasty, also required the adoption of Chinese institutions and led to what has been perceived as the "sinicization" of the Jurchen. Many Jurchen, however, including members of the royal clan, were unwilling to forego their ethnic inner Asian tradition and culture. The consciousness of the threat to the integrity of their ethnic and cultural identity can be seen in the measures taken by several emperors to mitigate the effects of cultural change among the Jurchen populace.[99]

The early Mongol state, from the period of rule of Chinggis Khan (1206–27) to that of Möngke Khaghan (1251–59), should be divided into two different periods. Under Chinggis Khan the Mongol state achieved an unprecedented degree of centralization and began the conquest of central Asia and part of northern China. Even so, Chinggis Khan's rule was strongly reminiscent of the older trade-tribute model of governance, as tributes were imposed on the Xi Xia and Jin, and Mongol rule of limited sedentary areas conquered in northern China remained essentially predatory. An early Mongol interest in trade can be glimpsed in the clash with the central Asian state of Khwarazm, which started with an incident related to the passage of Mongol-sponsored trade caravans through the kingdom.

Only under Ögödei was the trade-tributary pattern abandoned in favor of conquest and direct rule. In this the Mongols were helped by a host of inner Asian and Chinese administrators who had previously served under the Jin dynasty or who came from urban central Asia and

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[98] On foreign trade during the Sung period, see Robert M. Hartwell, "Foreign Trade, Monetary Policy, and Chinese 'Mercantilism,'" in *Collected Studies on Sung History Dedicated to James T. C. Liu in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Kinugawa Tsuyoshi (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1989), pp. 453–88; Yoshinobu Shiba, "Sung Foreign Trade: Its Scope and Organization," in *China among Equals*, ed. Rossabi, pp. 94–102.

[99] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Jin Dynasty (1115–1234)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 68–72.

Uighur principalities of the Tarim Basin. Among the most famous administrators, the Khitan Yelü Chucai (1189–1243) and the central Asian Mahmūd Yalavač . . . (?–1254) were responsible for the Mongols' adoption of sedentary systems of taxation.[100] Still, the capital of the empire, Karakorum, erected in the middle of the steppe, symbolized the strong bond of the Mongols with their nomadic heritage. Only in the following phase of state-building based on direct taxation did Mongol polities in China and Persia convert to the total and direct exploitation of sedentary resources and deeper integration of nomadic and sedentary models of governance.

Direct-taxation Empires (1260–1796)

In this period nomadic-type polities became able to extend their rule over a wide variety of peoples and lands. The crucial difference with respect to the previous phase is that these states no longer based their survival, even partially, on tribute from a large neighboring sedentary state but were instead able to extract all their resources directly from the conquered territories.

The completion of the conquest of China under Khubilai is the best example of the confidence achieved by the Mongols to summon a wide array of political resources derived from the storehouses of inner Asian, central Asian, northern Chinese (Liao and Jin), and Chinese political traditions. The edifice they created, however, was fundamentally flawed. It was ethnically disharmonious due to institutionalized racial divisions. Moreover, the metropolitan government was plagued by the proliferation of an extraordinarily wasteful central administration made up mainly of service agencies for the emperor and his entourage and poorly connected with the provinces. Lastly, the Mongols' attitude to governance remained erratic and negligent, and some of the characteristic features of the inner Asian political tradition—such as principles of inheritance, privileges granted according to race and lineage affiliation, and the partnership between sectors of the central government and merchant organizations—remained very much in evidence. Yet no matter how rudimentary and primitive some of the instruments of government adopted by the Mongols were, the completion of the

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[100]For biographies of Yelü Chucai and Mahmūd Yalavǎc, see *In the Service of the Khan*, ed. Igor de Rachewiltz et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), pp. 136–71, 122–27. For two different views on Mongol taxation, see John Masson Smith, "Mongol and Nomadic Taxation," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 30 (1970): 46–85; F. H. Schurmann, "Mongol Tributary Practices of the Thirteenth Century," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19 (1956): 304–89.

conquest of China and Persia, and the replacement of tribute and trade revenues with systems of direct exploitation of the settled peoples, set the Mongols one notch above the previous inner Asian polities. Taxation, however, did not replace trade, which remained a fundamental pursuit of Mongol rulers both in China and Persia. Their interest in revenues yielded by international commerce and financial networks led, in fact, to the development of merchant partnerships and to an active involvement of Mongol governments in the manipulation of bullion flow.[101]

The rise of Tamerlane and his spectacular conquests were carried out by a huge army supported through the revenues extracted from both sectors of the economy: agriculture and animal husbandry. It was the tax system of the agricultural regions that provided fuel for the military expansion. The success of military campaigns was not followed, however, by the incorporation of all conquered territories. Tamerlane's well-known policy was to expand the taxable sedentary sector of his population, so that the agricultural areas were brought under administrative control and developed economically, while the steppe regions were not incorporated, as they presented but few economic advantages, and potentially could drain more resources than they produced.[102]

A case can be made for the inclusion of the Ottoman empire as well into this periodization framework. Although the so-called *ghazi* theory, which explained the Ottoman conquest in terms of holy war, has been subject to intense criticism, more recent studies question one-sided approaches and bipolar oppositions.[103] Leaving aside the issue of

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[101]On merchant partnerships, see Thomas Allsen, "Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners," *Asia Major* 3d ser., 2 (1989): 83–126; and Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yuan China: The *Ortogh*," *Asia Major* 3d ser., 2 (1989): 127–54. On the Il-khans and their involvement in international commerce, see A. P. Martinez, "Regional Mint Outputs and the Dynamics of Bullion Flows through the Il-khanate," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (1984): 121–73; and Id., "The Wealth of Ormus and of Ind: the Levant Trade in Bullion, Intragovernmental Arbitrage, and Currency Manipulations in the Il-Xanate," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995–97): 123–252.

[102]Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Temür and the problem of a conqueror's legacy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3d ser., 9 (1998): 21–41.

[103]For the "*ghazi* theory," see Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938). Rudi Lindner understands the rise of the Ottomans in terms of inner Asian politics, and dismisses any notion of an initial Muslim influence as a later fabrication; see his *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, Ind.: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1983), pp. 105–12. On the other hand, Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), provides solid evidence that the simple dichotomy between an inner Asian historical reality and a retrodictive ideological Islamization cannot stand the test of accurate and broad source analysis.

the religious nature of the Ottomans' expansion, it is revealing that the history of the early Ottomans displays features analogous to processes typical of the eastern inner Asian empires: the warlike, nomadic, and tribalized "core" of the state; the militarization of society following the establishment of a central polity; and the tension between centrifugal (tribal and localistic) and centripetal (statelike and universalistic) "pulls."[104] By the mid-fifteenth century the Ottoman state had completed the transition from basing its economic survival on extraction of wealth from raids and trade to relying on the administrative control and acquisition of land-based resources. The success of the Ottomans in providing good administration—thereby ending a situation of disorder and lack of security—may have also depended on their acquaintance with and readiness to adopt "sedentary" practices of government from the Ilkhans and the Byzantines.[105] Indeed, after the conquest of Constantinople (1453) one may hesitate to consider the Ottomans an inner or central Asian polity.

In the east there was a hiatus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries during which no overarching imperial nomadic formation appeared in the north.[106] After this hiatus similar elements of "modernity" are visible in perhaps even greater relief in the case of the Manchus' Qing dynasty (1636–1911), given the considerable knowledge we have of their preconquest state and society (1616–44).[107] The Qing dynasty achieved a level of social and political integration between conquerors and conquered far higher than that of earlier inner Asian polities. The Manchus also retained features of the inner Asian tradition, such as the primacy of the charismatic clan, principles of inheritance and privileged access to public positions based on lineage, and preservation of ethnic, religious, and linguistic divisions. The Manchus, a highly militarized society, were able to impose and preserve their ethnic minority rule over one of the largest empires in history thanks to their closer

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[104] The theme of the struggle with other, possibly more conservative members of the tribal aristocracy is present, for instance, in the story of Osman's shooting his uncle Dündar with an arrow. The militarization of society through centralization of revenues can be seen in Mūrad I's institution of his Janissary, the central army under the direct control of the royal house, with resources subtracted from the booty retrieved in raids by the "frontier warriors." See Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds,* pp. 105, 112.

[105] Zeki Velidî Togan, quoted in Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds,* p. 45.

[106] This can be attributed to several factors, such as the Ming dynasty's success in keeping the various Mongol tribes divided or the change in the rules of imperial legitimation among post-Chinggisid Mongols. Still, as indicated above, the state is not a necessary condition in the life of nomads, and explanations as to why states did not emerge at particular times are likely to be tautological.

[107] For a collection of sources on early Manchu history, see Giovanni Stary, *Materialen zur Vorgeschichte der Qing-Dynastie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996).

attention to the conditions of the conquered society; an overall non-predatory attitude to governance; a less wasteful central government; and a highly developed system of communication between the center and the peripheral areas. The key to their success was their ability to limit the proliferation of the aristocracy and to neutralize centrifugal tendencies through the institutionalization of the aristocracy's role within the military and bureaucratic structure known as the banner system. Tributary relations remained a way of managing foreign relations but were irrelevant to the maintenance of the state apparatus.[108] During the Qianlong reign period (1736–95), the conquest process also reached its maximum expansion, including the incorporation of Tibet and eastern Turkestan, and the destruction of the Zunghars, potential epigones of the inner Asian imperial tradition.

The Qing came very close to achieving a perfect balance between, on the one hand, the militarized society and expanded ruling elite created in the conquest period and, on the other, the resources extracted from China; between the ruling privilege of the conqueror and the administrative structures of the conquered; and between social integration and cultural preservation. Already during the eighteenth century inner Asian characteristics among the Manchu court and people were becoming vestigial or merely symbolic. Due to the radical transformations that took place both inside and outside inner Asia, by the nineteenth century the inner Asian imperial tradition was all but gone. The mass conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism had produced deep changes in the social and political processes of that society. At the same time, the volume of inner Asian trade had been declining, and with much of the steppe region under the direct control of China and Russia, inner Asian peoples lacked the breathing space to initiate autonomous political processes. Moreover, the permanent loss of military superiority due to sophisticated firearms condemned them to struggle merely for survival.

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to tie the emergence of the inner Asian state to the notions of crisis, militarization, centralization, and acquisi-

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[108] On this, see John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, "On the Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6 (1941): 135–246. For a recent reevaluation and critical understanding of the tribute system, see James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 9–15.

tion of external resources. The "crisis" scenario was defined as a disruption of production due to a variety of possible factors, both environmental and historical, long and deep enough to upset the social order and to lead to widespread conflict. The growth of the military ratio in society and the professionalization of soldiers in the service of competing leaders was followed by the emergence of a "charismatic leader" accepted by the majority of the people as supreme leader. The appearance of what I have defined, following Salzman, as an imperial "ideology in reserve" was not a mechanical reaction but only one of the possible options. Disbandment, surrender to more powerful tribes, migration near sedentary areas, submission in exchange for relief, and even sedentarization are also historically documented. A charismatic leader would be recognized by the "body politic" of the emerging state through a "sacral" investiture, which gave him supreme (though not absolute) power over the tribes. At this point a new political structure would appear, one that was hierarchical, vertical, and centralized. The old tribal aristocracy was also reorganized into a pyramidal military structure. The thin layer of surplus previously appropriated by the relatively small tribal aristocracy of the prestate society became insufficient to support the khan's private establishment and clan, the court, an expanded aristocratic class, and the troops in their permanent service. This new ruling class was then compelled to find external sources of revenue if it intended to survive as a dominant class within a state in which it enjoyed special privileges.

From early on, the history of nomadic-type states revolved around the search for more efficient and more sophisticated ways to supply the new politically dominant class with sufficient means for its continued existence. The appearance of more complex political formations should not be seen as an "evolutionary" process, but rather as a gradual opening up and accretion of more options as experiences of statecraft accumulated over time. Inner Asian polities continued to adapt to historical circumstances along a scale of possibilities with tribal fragmentation at one end and centralized states at the other. But the "quality" of the states created varied and was subject to historical change, as new political solutions were found and institutions were successfully imported from other political cultures and traditions. Thanks to the experience of rulership of Türks and Mongols, the Manchu and Ottoman emperors had in their political "quiver" a larger number of arrows than their steppe forefathers, such as the Xiongnu or the Seljuks. The direction of this historical process of gradual broadening of the inner Asian political spectrum—albeit in a nonlinear, fragmentary, often

regressive way—tended toward securing deeper access to and firmer grasp over external resources. The gradual—yet uneven—expansion of ways to achieve a better control and management of revenues appears, then, to be a crucial feature and a major driving force in the history of inner Asian states. On this basis I have suggested a periodization based on four predominant features of collection of external revenues: tribute, trade, dual administration, and agrarian taxation. Tribute was the main source of income for the earliest states (phase 1). It was effective but vulnerable. Pressures from tributary states and independent-minded tribal leaders could easily reach the point where the leader was no longer able to hold the reins of the state. Succession struggles, internal rebellions, wars against tributary states, and cessation of tributary payments, coupled with the omnipresent danger of natural calamities, could easily reduce these "tributary" formations to rubble.

A big leap forward was taken when inner Asian states managed to exercise a form of centralized control over commercial activity, either by monopolizing it or by taxing it (phase 2). With Türks, Uighurs, and Khazars, we see a "structural" alliance between emperors and merchant communities; this partnership also favored the spread of western and central Asian peoples, goods, and religions.

The third phase saw the expansion of inner Asian polities into areas inhabited by settled people and the adoption of systems of direct taxation of farmers, which were added to the tributary and trade revenues. At this time inner Asian polities began to conquer and rule sedentary peoples, and new administrative solutions were derived from the sedentary tradition or adapted from the nomadic tradition.

Finally, in the fourth period, extensive territorial conquests indicate the mature ability of the inner Asian polity to use a broad range of political and administrative instruments of government of sedentary subjects: systems of direct extraction of revenues from the producers are fully embraced, and tribute and trade revenues have little or no relevance.

Views of "steppe empires" as either "eruptions" or "environments" show their limits more clearly when called upon to account for the different ways in which successive nomadic and seminomadic polities interacted with sedentary societies. The periodization scheme outlined here allows historians to examine the broader, world historical role played by inner Asian empires not in terms of their "impact" on conquered societies but in terms consistent with their internal political and economic dynamism. Why were some more interested in commerce than others? Why did some insist on territorial conquests, while others

did not? Why were some inner Asian peoples more easily "assimilated," and why did assimilation or acculturation take so many different shapes? All these questions are ultimately related to the inner Asian polity's attempts and capacity to reach out of its own limited productive and social basis; those efforts resulted in the creation of original and sophisticated forms of government.